1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

ibele (plur. *mabele*), a breast. This includes all who are supposed to be descended from a common ancestress. Often the direct line of descent from the founding ancestress is not known for more than three or four generations. The small groups which can definitely claim to be 'of one breast' constitute the distinct matrilineal groups which live together in separate hamlets within a village. Each is undifferentiated in relation to other matrilineal groups, but internally each is differentiated on the principle of sibling unity.

The main emphasis of the kinship system is on the bond between a man and his sisters. Their relationship is summed up in the word *mbumba* (translated by Mitchell as 'sorority group'). A man speaking of his *mbumba* refers to all the women he calls sister, their daughters, and their daughters' daughters. Strictly speaking, female kin in the ascending generations are excluded, as belonging to the *mbumba* of his mother's brother. The 'warden' of a sorority group, *asyene mbumba*, is the senior of the brothers and is responsible for the behaviour of the women in his charge; he appears for them in court and pays fines on their account. He plays an important part in the marriage negotiations. It is his duty to consult the diviner if his sister or her child falls ill, and to be chief mourner at the funeral of either of them, also providing medicine for the ritual purification at the end of the mourning period. Formerly these obligations were balanced by certain rights. He could sell some of them into slavery for his own personal reasons. This privilege is ended, but even to-day it is through his sorority group that a man achieves status and independence.

The principle of sibling unity is expressed in many other ways. A man and his sister reciprocally call each other *alumbwangu*. More usually, a woman calls her brother, older or younger than herself, *acimweni* (a term of respect usually applied to a chief), for any brother may be regarded as warden of her sorority group. A man has the same duties to his younger brothers as to his sisters, so they also call him *acimweni*, but he calls them *mpwanga* 'younger brother', as they can never be in the position of warden in relation to him. Maternal uncles are called *akwelume*, and a sister's son *cipwa*.

Within each matrilineal descent group, differentiation takes place between members according to whether they are siblings or not. A man's sorority group included ideally his own siblings and their female matrilineal descendants. His sister's daughters are also the sorority group of his sister's son, their brother, so that any woman can belong at any one moment to the sorority groups of her brother, her mother's brother, her mother's mother's brother, &c., but the effective one is that of her own brother, if adult. He is consulted first in small disputes, and at the marriage ceremony each party is represented by a brother as well as by a mother's brother. In the break-up of a hamlet (described below, p. 12), siblings tend to hold together more closely than cousins and to form groups of their own, so that each woman in the descent line is a potential point of cleavage. Tension between brothers as they compete for control of the sorority group is a source of friction within the sibling group which eventually leads to its disruption.

Since marriage is mainly matrilocal, and extra-village, the husband in his wife's village is seen as a stranger by all the members of her matrilineal descent group. There is a tendency for members of such descent groups to live together in a cluster of huts. The word 'hamlet' is used by Mitchell to indicate a cluster of huts, in which

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

expressed also in the speeches by the marriage sureties. The couple are exhorted to refer disputes to the sureties, and to consult the diviner in case of sickness.[1] After the rite these two sureties have special responsibilities towards the couple; grievances are referred to them, and they must be present when adultery cases are heard in court. If the marriage witness ceremony has not been performed, the relationship is not regarded as legal and no adultery compensation can be claimed by the husband.

Divorce used to be a private affair, which was merely signalized by one party giving to the other an arrow as a token of separation.[2] Nowadays all divorce cases go to court. The woman is usually asked to choose between her husband and the adulterer, and the compensation paid to the former, if she decides to leave him, is higher—amounting to about 10s. A man can be sent away from the village by his wife's kin, but if he has given no grounds for divorce he can claim compensation and will also take back any gifts made to his wife. A few small gifts to his mother-in-law are not reclaimed. Divorces are easily obtained and frequent. Grounds for the divorce of a man may include failure to pay hut tax, one of the specific duties of the husband.

The custom of making a marriage payment is recorded by Johnson[3] (on the east coast of Lake Nyasa) as a relatively new adoption. When given it is divided between the bride's father, mother, and mother's brother and brother.[4]

Slavery

Domestic slavery was an important institution in the Yao social system. Slaves were obtained by capture, purchase, or in compensation for injury.[5] A man would pay a debt by giving slaves (wives or members of his matrilineal kin group) to his creditors.[6] A man might voluntarily enslave himself to a man having charge of many women, as a means of obtaining a wife.[7] The children of a free man and a slave woman were not emancipated, as their father could not take them from the village of their mother's master, who had the right to sell them.[8] Slaves took part in the ordinary life of the village; women slaves ranked as junior wives of their masters and shared the usual work of women. Men might be supplied with guns for hunting or might accompany their masters to war, trade for them, spin, weave, sew, make baskets.[9] The institution of domestic slavery was an expression of a dominant motif in Yao culture—the association of status with a large number of dependents. Its abolition by the British was in itself a major blow to the prestige and authority of the chiefs.

Information about the social organization of the Yao in Portuguese East Africa is scanty, but it is in agreement with what is known of the Nyasaland Yao; Heckel, who knew the Yao in Lindi district, Tanganyika Territory, confirms the correctness of Stannus's account of the South Nyasa Yao.

The Yao came into Nyasaland in small parties of kinsmen. Their experience and their superior weapons soon enabled them to dominate the Nyanja among whom they settled, and today they dominate the population of the Southern Province. They are organized into loose groups of villages, under petty, independent chiefs. They seem

[1] Stannus, 4, 1922, p. 245; Hynde, 1895; Johnson, 5, 1922, pp. 69–73; Macdonald, 1882, vol. i; Werner, 1906, pp. 129–32.
[2] 1922, pp. 72–3.
[3] Stannus, 4, 1922, p. 280.
[4] Stannus, 4, 1922, p. 280.
[5] Werner, 1906, pp. 152–3; Stannus, 4, 1922, p. 237.
[6] Stigand, 1909, p. 122 (not a reliable source).
[7] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. 166–7.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Werner, 1906, p. 273.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

had no hostile axes to grind. Younger brothers and sisters' sons might have used the military forces against him, or they might have squandered the wealth of the caravans because they had a jural right to it. As the sons grew older they were given groups of slaves and slave-wives to look after, and so they became village headmen under the chief. Many of them came to have initiation rights and hold other positions of importance.

The chief was also connected to other Invader headmen through marriage. It is clear that affinal links become in time cognatic, but the marriage of the chief with a headman's sister fixes the relationship between that headman and the chief in perpetuity. The succeeding chief does not look upon the village headman who is his mother's brother's wife's brother as a father-in-law, as he would if he were a commoner, but instead calls him 'brother-in-law'. Also, all the successors of the village headman call all the succeeding chiefs by this term, so that the political structure of the area becomes phrased in a kinship idiom: the quasi-kinship of headman and chief in this context becomes suffused with political meaning. The number of village headmen who claim some affinal relationship to the chief is not great—only 10 of the total of 205 (i.e. 4·9 per cent).

TABLE VIII

PROPORTIONS OF RELATED AND UNRELATED HEADMEN AMONG THE NEWCOMERS

Chief's Relatives						Non-Relatives	Total
Direct			Clan				
Mat.	Pat.	Aff.	Mat.	Pat.	Aff.		
0	13	15	24	13	16	300	381
0	3·4	3·9	6·3	3·4	4·2	78·8	100%
7·3%			13·9%			78·8%	

Among the Aborigines and Newcomers, naturally, there are very few direct relatives. There are, of course, no matrilineal relatives. The patrilateral relatives amongst the Newcomers (3·4 per cent) are those of Kawinga who have moved into Chamba and Liwonde areas. There have been various mar-

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

riages between the chiefs and Newcomers and as a result there are 3·9 per cent of the Newcomer headmen who are linked affinally to the chiefs. The proportion of affinally-linked headmen in the two categories is approximately the same. The major differences are among the proportions of headmen linked by matrilineal and patrilateral ties to the chief.

Clanship with the Chief

A more numerous category is those who are related to the chief, not by common descent but by clanship.

Informants tell me that before the Whites came to Nyasaland, each person took the clan-name of his mother. People who had the same clan-name were said to be ' of one kind ' (*lukosyo lwamo*). The word *lukosyo* had no other meaning but ' kind ' or ' sort ', and the word *mtundu* is frequently used as a synonym. If a man is asked his *lukosyo*, he is as likely as not to give the reply ' Yao ' or ' Machinga ', i.e. his tribal origin. By extension it follows that if two people have the same clan-name inherited from their mothers, and their mothers in turn have inherited it from their mothers, and so on, eventually there must be a common ancestress. The two people therefore call each other ' brother '. However, among the Yao there are no stories of the origin of clans and only vague traditions of a common clan ancestress. I often questioned Yao about their clan-names and joked with them that though they were Invaders they shared the same clan-names as their subjects. The clan-names I found among the Machinga Yao were *apiri*, *amilasi*, *ambewe*, *abanda*, *asimbiri*, *amwale*, *angoma*, and these clan-names also appear among the Marawi group of tribes (Cewa, Maŋanja, Cipeta, Mbo, etc.), the Lakeside Tonga of Chinteche district, and the Mpotola and Lomwe or Nguru from Portuguese East Africa. The Achisi Yao under Katuli, a group related to the Mataka Yao from Portuguese East Africa, do not have these clan-names, nor, as far as I know do the Yao in Tanganyika. Clan-names, therefore, may be a feature of the Machinga Yao in Nyasaland, acquired as a result of their contact with the Marawi and other indigenous peoples of that country. It is significant that the clan-names are not as a rule common Yao words for everyday objects in the same way that clan-names amongst, say, the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia, are names of plants, animals and other natural phenomena. The word

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

their councillors at the courts. If they were relatives of the chief it is almost certain that he would have mentioned them. We may assume then that the true proportion of unrelated headmen among the Newcomers is, as we would expect, very much greater than among the Invaders.

Of the total of 424 Administrative villages there were ten in which I did not record the formal relationship to the chief. In Table IX I set out the proportions in these categories among the Administrative village headmen, and there is no radical difference between these proportions and those for all village headmen.

TABLE IX

PROPORTIONS OF RELATIVES AND NON-RELATIVES AMONG ADMINISTRATIVE HEADMEN*

	Chief's Relatives						Non-Relatives	Total
	Direct			Clan				
	Mat.	Pat.	Aff.	Mat.	Pat.	Aff.		
Invaders . .	18 (13·2)	23 (16·9)	6 (4·4)	24 (17·6)	11 (8·1)	9 (6·6)	45 (33·1)	136 (99·9%)
Newcomers .	0 (0·0)	9 (3·5)	12 (4·7)	20 (7·8)	11 (4·3)	12 (4·7)	193 (75·1)	257† (100·1%)
Total . .	18	32	18	44	22	21	238	393

$n = 6$; $\chi^2 = 90{\cdot}5$; $p = 0{\cdot}0001$.

* This table excludes the 21 Aborigines.

† Excludes 10 villages for which I have not recorded this information.

To summarize, we may characterize the Invaders as Yao, Moslems, and associates of their chiefs by historical connections and kinship ties. The Newcomers and the Aborigines on the other hand are of different tribes. They have more diverse religions, are not connected to the chiefs by kinship ties as closely as the Invaders are, and do not share with them the strong bond of being co-Invaders. It is in the struggle for prestige and rank that these bonds with the chiefs assume significance.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

brought out of the hut, as always, songs were sung and speeches were made. One of the songs was : 'A tree when it grows, grows with its branches.' [1] This is a reference to the dependence of the village headman upon the increase of his relatives for an increase in his rank. The Yao compare kinship with a tree, the component segments of the maximal lineage (the tree) being the branches. Then one of the officiating headmen mentioned that there were many sisters' sons of the old Mapata but that Kawinga and Chiwalo had selected the one on the chair to be the headman. He then exhorted the others neither to be jealous nor to resort to sorcery, but to exalt the name [2] that it might live long. This was followed by a song which introduced a second theme, 'A husband however rich he becomes here, cannot climb high.' [3] This song emphasizes that the uxorilocal husbands of the village can never achieve rank outside their own matrilineal villages however rich they are. The officiating headman then went on to say that some women rebuke their husbands when they speak subversively, but others side with them against the village headman. He told the husbands and women that they were wrong to do this and that they must desist. After this followed a public rebuke of the village as a whole. One of the younger brothers of the new headman pointed out that when the mother of the previous Mapata had died she had been buried in the graveyard and not in the village. He rebuked the villagers and told them that, when the present chief died, he should be buried in the village. A man who had been charged with neglect by his wife (his cross-cousin) paid the headman the compensation which he had refused to pay to her. One of the headmen then exhorted the villagers to respect their headman ; to send someone to accompany him on his journeys to see to his wants ; never to allow the headman to carry a gift he had been given, and so on. The ceremony ended when Kapaloma, who was representing the chief, hinted that Mapata might be allowed to wear a scarlet headband in the near future.

Village headmen represented the chief at Nkacelenga's and

[1] *Mtera punkukula ukuwa ŵananyambi.*

[2] *Kwenya lina*—to cause the name to climb.

[3] *Tonde, tonde, mkamwini nasicila muno ngakwela iai.* Tonde is the word for billy goat and its use here emphasizes the procreative functions of the husband in the village.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

593 586 economic responsibility of all the woman's children regardless of whether he has begotten them or not. For example, gossips say that a woman married my clerk so that she could have her son initiated. The costs and fees for this boy's initiation amounted to over a pound.

593 602 The other set of rights that paternal recognition confers on the child are the moral rights against his paternal kinsmen. A person may turn to his 'father's people' (*kucitati*) in times of dire need, especially if one of them is rich. This right persists after divorce, though the children are adult and otherwise economically independent. For example, a woman who was married to a labour migrant needed clothes badly. She turned to Chiwalo her father, though he had been divorced from her mother for more than 15 years. People in trouble often run away to their father's village and find shelter there. A man who wanted medicine for success in gambling asked his father for it. Another who had broken a sexual taboo confessed to his father who found suitable medicine for him. In each of those relationships there was an intimate personal element.[1] A person has the moral right to appeal to his father or paternal kinsmen, but he has no legally enforceable right to demand help. He has to rely on their kindness and charity. There are few fathers who would deny their children's requests if they are reasonable, but they can if they wish to.

582 586 613 The divorce rate is high among the Yao [2] and a typical family of five uterine siblings may have three fathers. Furthermore, a man should not marry into the lineage segment where his brother has married, so that the patrilateral kinship ties of the members of matrilineages tend to spread widely in the vicinity of the village. The effect of this is that the members of the lineage as a whole have widespread connections with neighbours upon whom they may rely in times of distress. But of the individual members of the matrilineage only a few share the same group

[1] Compare Fortes's description of uterine kinship among the Tallensi: '[It] is essentially by a personal bond, a bond of mutual interest and concern uniting individual to individual', *The Web of Kinship*, 37.

[2] Eight of every ten men and women over the age of 40 have experienced a divorce at some time of their lives. Excluding the contingency of death a married couple have only 30 chances in 100 of living together for 20 years. For details, see *Marriage among the Machinga Yao*.

7: Hetherwick M-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FT7 Yao FT7

775 present fortunes. But it is to the human soul after death, when it is considered as having an influence on the lives and fortunes of those it has left behind in the world and consequently as a power to be propitiated and honoured, that the term *mulungu* is more strictly applied. Freed from the body it passes to *mulungu*, and there is regarded as endowed with powers which it never possessed when alive on
769 earth. To pray to such a spirit is described as *kulomba mulungu*, to worship *mulungu*, never *kusopa* in this case. Such *mulungu* worship enters largely into Yao religious or social life. In almost every Yao village there will be found a shrine which is the centre of the worship of the inhabitants. It consists of a carefully
346 built hut enclosed within a strong grass fence or hedge of a species of cactus plant.
769 The hut itself is built of the usual native materials—the walls of wooden posts,
778 bamboos, and strong reed grass bound together with bark-rope and plastered over with clay or stiff mud. The roof is of grass laid on a framework of bamboos, and is generally covered with long stripes of white or coloured calico. On the ridge or apex of the roof are fixed a couple of flags or an umbrella or two. One wall is usually left open so that the interior is easily seen. Within, from the bamboo rafters are suspended handkerchiefs, cloths, bunches of beads, etc., all offerings to the *mulungu* of the dead headman or chief from his friends and relatives. The floor is of clay carefully smeared with sand in native fashion. A raised platform or mound of earth in the centre marks the spot where the grave was made. The
764 *awilo* or officials who preside at the funeral obsequies, first dug for about 8 or 10 feet down in a perpendicular direction, and then on the western side of this well they hollowed out a shallow cave in the earth. In this the body was placed, laid on its side with the knees bent up under the chin, and the face turned towards the east. Various articles of personal property were next placed beside the corpse, clothes, ivory, guns, axes, hoes, etc., and the mouth of the cave closed up with wooden posts and a strong reed mat. The grave was then filled in and the surface
[768] carefully finished as we have seen. At the head of the mound a native pot was fixed in the ground for the reception of the offering of beer which is an almost invariable accompaniment of any act of worship paid to the *mulungu* of the dead.

769 . Such a shrine marks the grave of almost every Yao chief or headman, and is
[775 regarded as the abode of his soul or the spot where his *mulungu* is most accessible.
622] If his successor is about to undertake a long journey or enter on any warlike expedition against an enemy or neighbour, he must first *kutopa mbepani*, place an offering here to secure the favour and assistance of the *mulungu* of the dead. Should a long-continued drought endanger the prospects of the grain crop, the departed chief must be solicited to send the lacking rain. A feast is first prepared, almost always of beer, sometimes with the addition of native porridge, fowl, or game. The worshippers gather round the shrine bringing part of the food which they have prepared. Their priest for the occasion is the successor of the dead chief, sometimes one or other of the *awilo* who placed the body in the grave, or it may be that any other near relation of the dead man is chosen to represent the people and act as their spokesman. The nearer the relationship the more influence will he have
[602] with the dead.

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT7 Yao FT7
MARAVI FR4

[P. 180C]

and Yao tribes, who there predominate. These peoples seem to have come from different parts of the continent. Their languages, despite a common Bantu descent and much recent borrowing, remain as distinct as possible and are obviously not modern dialects of one more primitive tongue ; their original social structures must, however, have been similar enough to attract them to each other, for they have so intermarried and their customs so fused, that one can now scarcely distinguish their ways of life and village organization. Indeed, while homesteads of apparently pure Nyanja and Yao still predominate, every considerable district contains members of both tribes, with some people, at least, of mixed descent ; moreover, and although one perceive a difference of character and manners, and trace it to the influence of Mohammedanism on the Yaos, one may well be unconsciously exaggerating. This account of relationship terms, (with brief reference to underlying social structure), must be taken, therefore, to cover the fusion of two once-separate tribes, and Nyanja and Yao equivalents must—unless otherwise stated—be understood as identical in meaning. In fact, Nyanja often prefer Yao terms to their own.

How far can one isolate the Nyanja-Yao social structure in order to study it ? Ngoni immigrants in this district are few, and their original patrilineal social system has largely succumbed to the customs of these earlier comers. The matrilineal system of the still more recent and numerous Lomwe immigrants is, I believe, (though my evidence is fragmentary), exerting a considerable influence on the somewhat dissimilar but also matrilineal Nyanja and Yao.

9:Lawson Y-5 (ca. 1940)1949 FT7 Yao FT7
[P.190A] MARAVI FR4

M 592 in-law in place of sons; and it is unlikely that many, indeed any, of his brothers will be able as A has done to overcome matrilocal prejudice. Many relatives, however, live close by, having broken apart from an originally large homestead; less than a mile off live an elder sister of A's mother, (*mai mamkulu*), with a married daughter, and perhaps a mile in the other direction live his mother's mother's brother and his mother's brother, (both *ambuye*), with their families of married daughters and granddaughters, unmarried sons and grandsons—a homestead of seven or more huts. Moreover, about fifteen miles to the East, near the shore of Lake Chilwa, is the original settlement of the Saima clan, to which A belongs through his mother and where, but for the peace brought by the Europeans, he and all his scattered relatives would probably still, he says, be living. Thus, though the average homestead to-day numbers, say, ten to fifteen huts, another part of the original family unit, (*mbumba*), is often to be found in a second small homestead not far off, and large compact villages of up to forty or fifty huts are still not uncommon. One chief's village I know has twenty-six huts, another beside the Shiré has thirty. Both these are matrilocal homesteads inhabited (if my informants were truthful) only by relatives and affines.

M 361 592

● Y M ● 602 The examples cited show how strong is the kinship tie even under modern disruptive influences, and suggest how all-powerful it once was. I have called it a key to Nyanja and Yao society, for I believe their culture derives from it at every point: marriage, homecraft, agriculture, education, religion, were all bound up with the *mbumba*. But my aim here is not to describe the tree, merely to try and unearth its roots; and so, with one suggestion as to how these roots are entwined, I must end.

Y M 614 We find among the Nyanja and Yao vestiges of an exogamous matrilineal clan system which hint at a possible origin of cross-cousin marriage. Any Nyanja or Yao will tell you that he inherits from his mother membership of a certain clan,